

Lesson 2 – Playing a NT Contract in 3NT

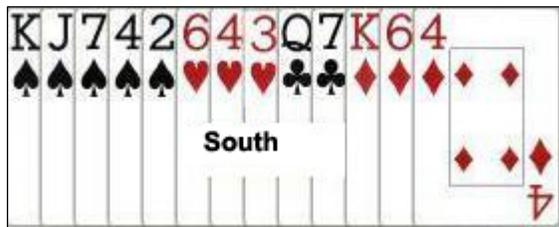
Note: The complete layout of the four hands for this game is shown at the end of this lesson so the cards can be set up for practice with 4 players.

Bidding:



North has 18 HCP, plus 1 pt for length.
North bids 1♦.

(West and East pass throughout.)



South has 9 HCP and responds 1♠.

North knows that South has 6+ pts and 4+ spades. North also knows they should be in game in NT.

North has three choices on his next bid:

- (1) Bid 3NT immediately or
- (2) bid 3♣, a jump shift, forcing, or
- (3) bid 2NT showing 18-19 pts and a balanced hand.

If North does either (2) or (3), South's next bid is 3♠, showing 5 spades, and then North will bid 3NT. In any case, the contract should end up at 3NT by North.

Playing the Hand:

Note: The hands may not play out exactly as indicated, but this is one possible scenario.

East will lead the first card. His fourth highest card from his longest, strongest unbid suit is ♥5.

South's dummy hand comes down and North must decide on a strategy. He has only 2 heart stoppers, but the lead gives him the option to play either the ♥A or ♥Q, depending on whether the ♥King appears or not.

Trick #1 ✓ — (The ✓ notation after a trick indicates a winner for N/S and the X indicates a lost trick.) North realizes that hearts is the dangerous suit, but he has one more stopper.

North counts his immediate winners: 2 hearts, 2 spades, no clubs (must lose 1 club to the ♣Ace, but will keep either the ♣King or ♣Queen to take one more trick

later), 2 diamonds = 7 winners. North must find two more winners to make his contract.

North's longest suit is diamonds. He will play over to the ♦King and then lead back towards the ♦A/♦J, trying a finesse.

Trick #2✓ (won by ♦King)

Trick #3✗ (when leading low towards the ♦A/♦J, the ♦Queen did not appear from West's hand, so North plays the ♦Jack and East's ♦Queen takes it). Finesses work only 50% of the time, so this should not be a surprise.

However, North's two small diamonds are now good. North knows he can now make the contract.

East will now play another heart. North will take it and has now lost all stoppers in hearts.

Trick #4✓.

Before playing any more cards, North will play low toward his ♣Queen.

Let's say West plays the Ace.

Trick 5✗.

West will play hearts next, so East/West take the next two tricks in hearts.

Trick 6✗

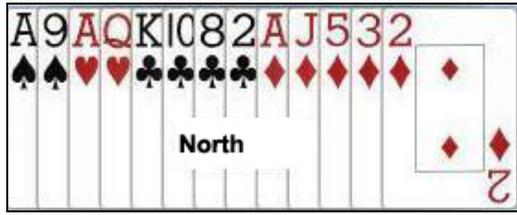
Trick 7✗

No matter which suit E/W play next, North will take his two spade winners, his three diamond winners and his club winner.

Tricks 8✓, 9✓, 10✓, 11✓, 12✓, 13✓. (6 more winners + 3 previously = 9 winners)

Notice how important it is to keep track of how many cards have been played in each suit.

North may make more than 9 tricks, depending on how the hands are played out.



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